

**MAINE FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
AUGUST 4, 2003**

Chief Darrel Fournier called the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission to order at 1:00pm at the Maine Emergency Medical Services conference room, Edison Drive, Augusta, Maine. Members present were Michael Albert, Jack Berry, John Cannon, Art Cleaves, John Dean, Representative Robert Duplessie, Chief Darrel Fournier, Albert Godfrey, Edward Johnston, Geoffrey Maker, Senator Richard Nass, Harty Norris, Chief Jethro Pease, David Wacker, Steve Willis, Drexel White (Jay Bradshaw's designee) and Susan Pinette (staff). Members absent included Senator Bruce Bryant, Representative Thomas Bull, Chief Jeffrey Cammack and Bill Williams. Maine Public Safety Commissioner Michael Cantara attended the meeting as guest of the Fire Commission.

Fire Commission members welcomed four new members- Art Cleaves representing the Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), Jay Bradshaw representing Maine Emergency Medical Services (MEMS), and Senator Richard Nass of York and Senator Bruce Bryant of Oxford representing the Maine Senate. Members also discussed the remaining three vacancies and suggested candidates for the positions. The vacancies include a representative from the Governor's Office, a representative from the House of Representatives and a representative from the insurance industry.

A motion by Al Godfrey, seconded by Harty Norris, to submit William O'Gara's name to fill the vacancy of the Governor's Office representative. The motion passed unanimously.

Fire Commission members also discussed submitting the name of Charles Soltan as representative from the insurance industry and the chair will contact Mr. Soltan to discuss his interest.

A motion by Jack Berry, seconded by Steve Willis, to accept the minutes of the June 2, 2003 meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion by Jethro Pease, seconded by Steve Willis, to accept the minutes of the April 7, 2003 meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Staff distributed two reports prepared by Penflex, Inc.- "Actuarial Study and Review for a Length of Service Award Program (final report) and "Volunteer Departments and Pension-like Programs", a state-by-state analysis of length of

service award (LOSAP) and similar programs. Fire Commission members discussed distributing the reports to their constituencies and decided to initially send copies with a cover letter to the Professional Fire Fighters of Maine, the Maine Fire Chiefs Association, the Maine State Federation of Fire Fighters, Legislative leaders and members of the Criminal Justice committee. Additional copies of the report will be printed and distributed and also posted on the Fire Commission's website.

A motion by Darrel Fournier, seconded by Jeff Maker, to send a letter and copies of the two Penflex, Inc. reports to the Professional Fire Fighters of Maine, the Maine Fire Chiefs Association and the Maine State Federation of Fire Fighters. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Darrel Fournier asked the Fire Commission permission to change the order of business and introduced Michael Cantara, Maine's Commissioner of Public Safety. Commissioner Cantara thanked the Fire Commission for their time and made a few remarks. Commissioner Cantara spoke of his longstanding interest in the fire service and told members that the consolidation of services and curriculum was of great interest to him. Commissioner Cantara added he was eager to work with the Fire Commission and offered the Department of Public Safety as a conduit to achieve common goals. Chair Fournier thanked Commissioner Cantara for his kind words and said the Fire Commission welcomed the openness and willingness to work in areas of mutual interest. Fire Commission members discussed a variety of issues of concern with Commissioner Cantara including the need for a constant broad-based funding source for the State Fire Marshal's Office and Maine Fire Training and Education. Members also spoke of health and safety demands- the needs are necessary and make good sense, but the cost of compliance is "out of control" for both career and volunteer firefighters. Members cited the need to define these laws and standards and then determine what needs to be done or changed. Members learned that an ad hoc group has been formed to look at these potentially unenforceable laws. This discussion went further to include the role of policy makers and citizens' expectations of what local fire departments can and cannot provide. Members spoke of the need to educate the public regarding the costs of services and what can reasonably be provided. Regionalization of services was discussed and suggestions to seek more state involvement. Members described to Commissioner Cantara the present training facilities and training programs throughout the state and the work of the Training Facilities committee.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Training Facilities: A GIS map was distributed and the committee expects to issue a draft of their report to the Fire Commission at the October meeting.

Nominations Committee: The Nominations committee reached unanimous agreement on a slate of officers for the Fire Commission.

A motion by John Cannon, seconded by Ted Johnston, to move the following slate of officers:

***Darrel Fournier- Chair
Al Godfrey- Vice Chair
Jeff Maker- Secretary
John Dean-Treasurer***

The motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS (continued)

Fire Commission members were updated on the current status of funding for the SFMO and MFT&E. Members learned that revenues were unpredictable- costs were rising but revenues were flat. Reliance on funding by the Fire Tax means that the better job the fire service does the less money available to fund the departments. Members also learned that fundamental services to the public were being funded by a “shrinking pie” of contributors (commercial market). Self-insureds and those in the risk pools do not contribute to the Fire Tax. These consumers of higher risk to the fire service are paying little or none of the cost of training firefighters. Members agreed further discussion of this issue among fire commission members, legislators and the State is needed.

Fire Commission members discussed the Fire Service conference tentatively scheduled for April 2004. Plans are to hold a one or two day event. The schedule would include a keynote speaker during the morning session and afternoon “breakout” sessions for training purposes. Members spoke of the need to include legislators and the difficulty of scheduling during the short legislative session. The availability of the Augusta Civic Center was also mentioned and the Augusta Armory was suggested as a possible alternative.

NEW BUSINESS

Fire Commission members learned that the first Public Safety Officer Death Benefit, paid to the survivors of a member killed in the line of duty, will be paid to Mrs. Wensel, wife of a Mexico firefighter. Mr. Wensel, a longtime firefighter for the town of Mexico and the father of the present chief of the Mexico fire department, lost his life while on duty. His widow will receive \$50,000 and John Dean will present the check.

John Dean nominated the Town of South Berwick for a Fire Commission “Best Practices Award” for adopting a residential fire sprinkler ordinance. South

Berwick is the first community in Maine to pass this type of ordinance. Representative Dick Brown, former town manager of South Berwick and a fire service advocate, was the driving force behind South Berwick's passage of the ordinance. Despite studies showing the positive results of the ordinance and other communities adopting similar laws, South Berwick is under pressure to remove the ordinance. Members also suggested the Fire Commission make a formal presentation at an upcoming South Berwick town meeting and write a press release to coincide with the meeting, include South Berwick in the January 2004 Fire Service Day at the State House, and mention the Best Practices award on the Fire Commission's website.

A motion by Steve Willis, seconded by Ted Johnston, to award a Maine Fire Protection Services Commission "Best Practices Award" to the Town of South Berwick for adopting a residential fire sprinkler system ordinance and setting standards for other communities in Maine to emulate. The motion passed unanimously.

Fire Commission members discussed the importance of the "Best Practices Awards" and the need to form a committee to oversee the nomination and award process. Chair Fournier appointed the following members to serve on the "Best Practices Award Committee"-

Jack Berry (chair)
Dave Wacker
Steve Willis
Mike Albert
Al Godfrey

Fire Commission members were asked to consider taking a position on the November referendum question. Members were told that education funding might result in possible cutbacks in other local services.

Fire Commission members learned that Gary Cole of the Cole Foundation has funded 131 thermal imaging cameras for fire departments across the state. In February 2004 an "Appreciation Night" is being planned and members of the Fire Commission are encouraged to serve on the committee.

On October 17th, the Fire Officer 1 program will begin at the Academy. MMA has agreed to sponsor 24 scholarships to attendees of this program. The scholarships will be for \$500.00 each- the total cost of the 9-day program is \$625.00.

The Maine Fire Fighter will be published in September and the final submission date is August 31st. The Fire Commission is encouraged to submit articles and there may be the possibility of a regular column.

Fire Commission members learned the bids to install sprinklers in the dorms have been submitted and are considerably below the original estimates.

Members agreed on the following meeting dates:

<u>Monday, September 8th</u>	1:00pm	Regular Meeting	MEMS conference room
<u>Monday, September 8th</u>	10:00am	Training Facilities Committee	MEMS office
<u>Monday, October 6th</u>	1:00pm	Regular Meeting	State House w/ Gov. Baldacci 2nd floor
<u>Monday, October 6th</u>	10:00am	Training Facilities Committee	MEMS conference room

With no further business to come before the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission, Chair Fournier adjourned the meeting at 2:35pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan M. Pinette